ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A speech synthesizer and a method for synthesizing speech are disclosed. The synthesizer has an output stage for converting a phonetic description to an acoustic output. The output stage includes a database of recorded utterance segments. The output stage operates: *a.* to convert the phonetic description to a plurality of time-varying parameters; and *b.* to interpret the parameters as a key for accessing the database to identify an utterance segment in the database. The output stage then outputs the identified utterance segment. The output stage further comprises an output waveform synthesizer that can generate an output signal from the parameters. Therefore, in the event that the parameters describe an utterance segment for which there is no corresponding recording in the database, the parameters are passed to the output waveform synthesizer to generate an output signal.